

# ILLINOIS FAMILIES Now and Forever

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship®

Department of Children and Family Services®



## From the DCFS Director

*Bryan Samuels*

Our mission at DCFS is straightforward: protect children, increase families' capacity to care for children, provide for the well being of children in our care, provide appropriate, permanent families as quickly as possible, support early intervention and child abuse prevention activities, and work in partnerships with communities.

While the mission has not changed, the means for accomplishing it have. Here are just a few of the Department's most recent responses to the changing needs of youth in care:

- Introduced the Child and Youth Investment Teams;
- Fully implemented Integrated Assessment;
- Fully implemented the Residential Performance Unit;
- Created an improved statewide shelter system;
- Developed a youth stabilization system in Cook County;
- Redesigned the Transitional Living Program and Independent Living Programs;

I encourage caregivers to look to these programs, work with your child's caseworker and use these resources to help youth succeed. As we move forward in 2006, please share your suggestions on how we can continue to improve the child welfare system.

## Get preschoolers off to right start

Much has been said about the older youth still in care. However, young children do enter the child welfare system. It is important to make sure they receive all they will need to be on the best footing when they leave care, regardless of the permanency path. DCFS is devoting resources to making sure children, before they reach age five, get a fair start to their education. That means starting early. Looking ahead to this Fall, the goal is to have young children in DCFS care attend a quality preschool from the time they turn three years old.

The Department is making big plans in the coming school year for the 3,000 children in care between the ages of three and five. The DCFS Education Advisors will be available to support families with pre-school children. Caseworkers will be focused on having young children assessed and enrolled in pre-school. DCFS is already working with Head Start programs in localities across the state to clear the path to enroll DCFS children.

The all-out push to enroll children in pre-school is driven by the fact that just being involved in the child welfare system puts their educational development at risk. A quality pre-school can allow them to catch up and get a fair start at being ready for Kindergarten.

Being ready for school means more than reading and writing. It includes having social skills and being emotionally healthy. Kids who are ready for school are cooperative, creative and physically healthy. They also have a basic understanding of standing in line, taking turns and other aspects of how school works.

De Nishia Yarby, a former foster child and DCFS scholarship recipient, knows how hard it is to make up lost ground.

"In first grade I still remember the other kids saying things like 'You're stupid' and 'We learned that in Kindergarten!' I hadn't been to preschool or Kindergarten and it showed all over my face," she said.

In the months leading up to school's start, caregivers of children aged three to five should take time to start looking for a quality Head Start, State Pre-K or accredited child care center preschool program. DCFS and private agency caseworkers will help connect families to resources. Also, caregivers can use one of the 16 statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies by calling 877-20-CHILD.

## From the editor



At least once a year, I like to let you know there is a real person behind the words. Not just a person, but a parent to children who, just like yours, can take you to up to the mountain top or deep down in the valley.

For 10 years, my husband and I have been foster parents. Our family has grown through two births and two adoptions. With foster care, we have parented through one disruption, two emergency placements, two returns to home and three moves to independence.

Last year, my family got an eye-ful of both the highs and lows. Our sons by adoption are 16 and 18 and oh, the valleys we have seen! Still, the sun is out there, peeking through the clouds. Our most recent rays of joy have been seeing our god-daughters through foster care turn 20 years old. Two out of three even admitted, "I wish I had listened when you told me..."

Our two birth daughters don't always understand the drama, but they have many good memories of all the brothers and sisters they claim as their own. It was almost worth it just to see the surprised look on the new teacher's face as my five year old described her "family" of three brothers and five sisters.

In the newsletters to come, look forward to more tales straight from my family to yours.

*Vanessa*

## New supports for youth at work

Youth who choose to work after high school have a new opportunity to help them move toward self-sufficiency. The Division of Service Intervention, Office of Education and Transition Services has developed the Employment Incentive Program (EIP). EIP is a new transition program that provides financial services to support adolescent youth learning marketable job skills either through on the job work experience or job training programs. The Employment Incentive Program (EIP) replaces the Youth In Employment Program (YIE).

One important new feature to the program is that Youth may live in a Department-funded placement while in the EIP. This includes foster care, supervised independent living, group home or institutional placements.

Youth approved for the EIP will receive a stipend of \$150.00 and a medical card for a maximum of 12 months. Stipend payments cease when the youth turns 21 years of age regardless of whether the youth completed 12 months in EIP. Start-Up Funding is also available based on need for work-related expenses (e.g., tools, work clothing, etc.) and limited to a one-time disbursement of up to \$200.00.

### Eligibility:

- The youth must be 17 years of age but not yet 21.

- The Department must have court-ordered legal responsibility for the youth.
- The youth must have received independent living skills training and adhere to the life skills assessment.
- The youth must have a high school diploma or GED.
- The youth must be in a certified job skills training program or must be working 20 hours per week.
- The youth may not be in the Youth in College or the DCFS Scholarship program or any other Department stipend program.

The Transition Coordinators in each region can assist with the referrals to the program. They are:

- Angela Foster, Cook North Transition Coordinator  
100 West Randolph, 6th Floor  
Chicago, Illinois 60601
- Ken Broady, Cook Central Transition Coordinator  
100 West Randolph, 6th Floor  
Chicago, Illinois 60601
- John Kasper, Cook South Transition Coordinator  
100 West Randolph, 6th Floor  
Chicago, Illinois 60601
- Freddie Higgins, Northern and Central Region Transition Coordinator  
5415 N. University, Room 103  
Peoria, Illinois 61615
- Gail Simpson, Interim Central Region Transition Coordinator  
406 E. Monroe Street, Sta. #22  
Springfield, Illinois 62701
- Johnny Williams, Southern Region Transition Coordinator  
406 E. Monroe Street, Sta. #22  
Springfield, Illinois 62701

## Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council has been active in examining DCFS policy concerning licensing. Much of the winter also focused on fulfilling its mandate for the Foster Parent Law. Below are highlights from the recent meeting.

### Service Appeals

Edgar Hernandez, manager of DCFS Regional Clinical Services, addressed the council on efforts to take a closer look at ways to prevent placement disruptions. One indicator is the service appeal process that he and staff are responsible for conducting with caregivers. Hernandez told the council that he would review service appeal data to analyze the kinds of appeals that are brought and how they are resolved. Council members will work with him to make recommendations on how to better support foster families and reduce the need for service appeals.

### Implementation Plan review and monitoring

The Statewide Council is mandated to review and score all Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans from DCFS regions and private agencies. By the February meeting, review of the 75 plans was nearly complete. The council members also volunteered to join the monitoring teams for the round of agencies due for tri-annual reviews. Council members and DCFS Agency Performance Team staff will visit the agencies and conduct interviews about agencies' plans and

how they are integrated into practice.

### New members

**Leanne Montgomery** joins the Statewide Council as a foster parent representing Central Region. She and her husband Ted are very active in their local support groups. They have adopted four children.



**Antoinette Walker** is a former child welfare administrator. She joins the council as an expert outside of DCFS with a degree in Human Services Administration. She is also a foster/adoptive parent.

**Heather Schumacher** works in Child Law with Camelot Community Care. She has 10 years of experience in foster care and holds a degree in child law.



**Ramon Nieves** has 20 years of foster care experience, including previous service as a DCFS Regional Administrator. He also has a master's degree in divinity.

## Child trauma class

This May, DCFS will roll out an important new training course on Child Trauma. The curriculum was developed in collaboration with the Domestic Violence & Mental Health Policy Initiative and Northwestern University. The course gives caregivers and professionals clear insight into how traumatic events can shape a child and practical skills for adults to respond.

The team-based training will involve foster parents and caseworkers, so they can share their unique perspectives on working and living with children who have suffered trauma from separations, violence, substance abuse, or any of the other experiences that can affect youth in care. Topics include:

- Impact of Trauma and Neglect on the Developing Child
- Understanding Children's Needs and Responses to Trauma Experiences
- Special Ecology of Foster Care—Partnering Together
- Trauma-Sensitive Information Gathering and Assessment
- Trauma-Informed Planning and Services for Children and Youth in Foster Care
- Promoting Resilience, Healing, and Recovery for Children in Care
- Working and Living with Children Who Have Experienced Trauma

The schedules for this two-day session will be listed in the education pages of the newsletter's regional editions.



## Check for recalled products to protect youngsters

Everyday life can be full of hazards for young children. Jacket buttons can cause choking, toys are decorated with lead paint or cribs can fall apart. Fortunately most products are safely made and those that have problems are addressed. DCFS policy requires foster parents of children age six or under to check their homes for products listed as unsafe by the Children's Product Safety Act. The complete list of unsafe products is available from

the Department of Public Health at 217-782-4977. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission maintains a product list along with helpful information at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). Another source for up-to-date information is [www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com). The site also offers a subscription service for automatic email updates. Below are just a few of the products recently recalled.

### Aspen 3-in-1 Crib by Graco

After the death of a 19-month baby, Simplicity Inc., of Reading Pa., is renewing the search for recalled Aspen 3 in 1 Cribs with Graco logos. The recall was conducted because the screws on the wooden mattress supports can come loose, allowing a portion of the mattress to fall. This poses a suffocation hazard to young children who can slide down and become entrapped between the unsupported mattress and end of the crib.

Consumers should contact Simplicity Inc. at 800-784-1982 or [www.simplicityforchildren.com](http://www.simplicityforchildren.com) to receive a free repair kit or for more information.



### Lily Chair Bean Bag Set

Design Ideas Ltd., of Springfield, Ill. is recalling the Lily chair and ottoman set. The chair and ottoman do not have locking zippers or warning labels. CPSC is aware

of children who have died from suffocation when they unzipped, inhaled and ingested small pellets in similar bean bag furniture.

Consumers should stop using the chair and ottoman set immediately, keep them out of reach of young children and contact Design Ideas at 800-426-6394 to arrange to return the product for a full refund.

### Radio Flyer Classic Walker Wagon

Radio Flyer Inc. of Chicago, Ill. is recalling the Classic Walker Wagon. The tips of the clickers, which make a clicking sound when the Walker Wagon wheels move, can break off. The broken clickers pose a choking or aspiration hazard to young children.

The recalled wooden Walker Wagon has a push handle and removable wooden stake sides. The recalled Walker Wagons have black plastic clickers that make a clicking sound when the plastic wheels turn. The clickers are located between the rear wheels and the wagon. The Walker Wagons with clear plastic clickers are not included in this recall.

Consumers should immediately take these recalled Walker Wagons away from young children and contact Radio Flyer for free replacement clickers.

### Safety 1st Tubside Bath seats

Dorel Juvenile Group, of Columbus, Ind., announced a warning for parents and caregivers who purchased the Safety 1st Tubside Bath Seats. The bath seats are not intended and should not be used with certain non-traditional or sunken bathtubs. In these types of tubs, the bath seat can break, tip over and a child can fall into the water.

Consumers are urged to ensure that Tubside Bath Seats are used in accordance with the instructions. Consumers should check the dimension of their tubs. If they have a non-traditional or sunken tub outside the specified dimensions or have a broken unit, the consumer should immediately stop using the Tubside Bath Seat and contact the firm at 888-698-6681 for information on how to get a \$20 rebate toward the purchase of any other Dorel Juvenile Group product. Consumers should not return product to retail stores.

### Bright Starts Jammin' Jumpers

Kids II Inc., of Alpharetta, Ga., is recalling its doorway jumper seat. The plastic clamp that attaches the jumper seat to a door frame can break, which can cause the unit to fall to the floor. This poses an injury hazard to young children.

Consumers should stop using the product immediately and disable the jumper by cutting a one-inch portion of the yellow strap just below the clamp. To receive a free replacement product, consumers should cut out the white warning label from the canvas seat and mail the label and the one-inch portion of the yellow strap to Kids II at 555 North Point Center East, Suite 600, Alpharetta, GA 30022.

### Fisher-Price pogo sticks



Fisher-Price is recalling the Grow-To-Pro Pogo Sticks. An internal metal pin can wear down, causing the pogo sticks to remain stuck in the down position and release unexpectedly,

posing a risk of fall or facial impact injuries to children. Consumers should take the products away from children immediately and contact Fisher-Price at 800-991-2444 to receive a free replacement pogo stick.

### Bratz Stylin' Scooters

MGA Entertainment Inc. is recalling the Bratz Stylin' Scooter manufactured by Jurong Dumar Bicycle, Inc. of China. The wheels of the scooter can break or become damaged, and users of the scooters can fall and suffer injuries. The product is a non-motorized two-wheeled scooter with a folding hinge and an adjustable handlebar. The scooter platform is purple with a bright pink Bratz logo on the top surface.

Consumers should stop using the scooter immediately and contact MGA at 800-222-4685 for a refund or a replacement scooter.

### Sony PS/2 Slim adapters

Sony is recalling certain AC Adaptors sold with slim version PlayStation 2 Systems. The recalled AC adaptors can overheat and melt. This poses the risk of fire, burn and shock injuries to consumers. The recall involves AC adaptors with the following date codes: 2004.08, 2004.09, 2004.10, 2004.11 and 2004.12 and serial numbers beginning with "F3". The AC adaptors were sold with slim version PlayStation 2 consoles with model number SCPH-70011 or SCPH-70012.

Consumers should stop using the recalled AC adaptors immediately and contact Sony Computer Entertainment America at 888-780-7690 to receive a free replacement adaptor. Consumers should carefully unplug the recalled adaptors from the wall outlet and allow to cool before handling.

## Tips to prevent choking

Choking has long been the leading cause of toy-related deaths to young children. To help prevent these deaths, the Consumer Product Safety Commission requires age-appropriate labeling on toys and products for older children that contain small parts. Toys designed for children 3 and older should be kept away from young children.

Balloons, a leading cause of toy-related deaths, are often a favorite of young children. However, un-inflated balloons and fragments from popped balloons can choke and kill a small child.

Tips to prevent choking:

- Keep small objects like small toys and parts of toys, marbles, balloons, small balls and coins off the floor and out of reach of children.
- Toys designed for older children should be kept out of the hands of little ones.
- Follow labels that give age recommendations; these age recommendations are based on safety concerns.
- Teach older children to help keep their toys away from younger siblings.
- Check the eyes and noses of stuffed animals to ensure they are properly secured.

## Try family camp for family fun

Summer camp fun doesn't have to be just for kids. Think about a family camp this year. Family camp can help bring together children and parents in a relaxing setting. Like a typical summer camp, family camps offer a range of activities ranging from crafts to sports. There is also time for just being together without the distractions of a hectic home life. Some camps even build in a therapy component along with recreation. Ask your caseworker or agency contact for recommendations for a camp that can encourage more communication and stronger bonds.

A trip to the woods where there is no TV or telephone can be cost-effective as well. Accommodations can range from rustic to resort-like, with average prices from \$60 for a weekend to \$350 for a week. A camp facility may provide meals or have amenities for families to fend for themselves.

To find a family camp that suits your needs, interests and budget, the American Camping Association lists accredited camps that can be search by location, type or cost. Call 765-342-8456 or visit [www.acacamps.org](http://www.acacamps.org).

## Get children ready for summer camp now

Summer camp is a fun, "rite of passage" that can sometimes be complicated for children with special needs. Fortunately, there are resources to help the child and the caregiver make the best decisions. Talk to your caseworker to determine what your child needs and what resources are available for summer activities. DCFS foster families should ask about the financial assistance available, the approval process and the reimbursement procedures. For private agency foster families, the policy can differ from agency to agency. Every agency receives funds for "nonrecurring expenses" such as camp for some children. Ask your child's caseworker about the camp policy for children served by your agency.

### Where to begin looking:

- Ask people you know, such as other foster parents or school parents for recommendations.
- Your child's school may have a local camp for sports or academics. Also check out higher education institutions for special programs for elementary and high school children.
- Your local church may have a youth camp or even a youth group that may take a small trip. (Be sure to ask about birth parent permission for a religious program).
- Ask your child's caseworker for information on special needs camps focusing on



ADHD or physical and developmental disabilities.

- Check organizations like the YMCA, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts for local camps.
- Contact the DCFS Local Area Network (LAN) liaison in your region for community-based programs.

### Don't forget!

- Check with your caseworker regarding reimbursement procedures.
- Make sure you have proof of a current physical before registration.
- Ask about policies for dispensing medications at camp.
- Ask your caseworker about the policy for traveling to an out-of-state camp.
- Send your camper off with stationery and stamps so you can receive letters.
- Send a letter to your camper early so it will arrive on the first day of camp.



# Subsidized Guardianship waiver tests permanency outcomes by offering more transition services for older youth

DCFS broke ground when it proposed the Subsidized Guardianship demonstration in 1996. That project allowed DCFS to address the permanency needs of youth in long-term kinship and foster care through a program with features that parallel the adoption subsidy program. The demonstration has proven successful and recently was extended through 2008. Moreover, DCFS and the federal agencies have worked in new features to encourage even better outcomes for youth in a new demonstration project, called the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship and Adoption Program.

The enhanced service package will look at outcomes from offering services that previously have been only available for youth who are being transitioned to independence from the foster care system. Under the waiver, these programs will be available to youth in the demonstration group who at age 14 or above are adopted or for whom guardianship has been transferred. The programs are:

- Youth in College (YIC)
- Employment Incentive Program
- Life Skills Training
- Housing Cash Assistance

Additionally, the Education and Training Vouchers currently for youth who reach permanency at 16 or older, will be available to youth eligible for the enhanced services. The enhanced service

package does not include transitional or independent living placement programs.

## Eligibility

Youth first must be assigned to the standard subsidized guardianship waiver demonstration group and must meet the eligibility criteria for the standard subsidized guardianship or adoption assistance program at the time permanency is achieved. From there, youth must be assigned to the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship and Adoption Program (ESGAP) demonstration group. If a youth is randomly selected to the control group, that case will still be eligible for the standard subsidy program, but will not have access to services offered to youth in the enhanced service package demonstration group.

The sibling exception will apply to children under the age of 14 if their guardianship is transferred or adoption finalized at the same time as that of an older sibling living in the same home and who meets all criteria for the enhanced waiver and is assigned to the ESGAP demonstration group.

## Accessing Services

If the child is eligible for the services offered through the Enhanced Service Package, the child's caseworker must complete the CFS 969-1, Understanding of Future Eligibility for the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship

and Adoption Program form. The signed original will be included in the child's subsidy packet prior to the transfer of guardianship or finalization of adoption. For a caregiver/and or youth to access enhanced services, they must contact the transition and education service manager at the regional office identified on their copy of the CFS 969-1. The transition service manager will verify the youth's eligibility, discuss program options and send a referral packet to the caregiver or youth to complete and return.

"Like the original subsidized guardianship waiver, this demonstration will provide the means to better measure what we can do to lead

to positive permanency outcomes for our older youth," said Cynthia Moreno, Deputy Director of Service Intervention.



Cynthia Moreno

The Enhanced Service Package started as a pilot in just a few regions. As of April 1, DCFS extended it to all regions.

For more information about the Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship and Adoption Program, contact the Division of Service Intervention at 312-814-5959.

## Illinois Adoption Advisory Council update

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council had a full agenda for their February meeting. Representatives from various Department functions addressed the council on issues of service and training specific to adoptive and guardianship families.

### Restructuring for Post-adoption Staff

DCFS Statewide Adoption Coordinator June Dorn announced that the Cook County Post Adoption and Guardianship Subsidy Unit added six new child welfare specialists. These individuals came from the DCFS Operations Division and are eager to begin assisting families that have moved to permanency. Outside of Cook County, post adoption staff are assigned to cover specific DCFS regions.

### Adoption Core training Curriculum

One major initiative for the Adoption Advisory Council is to help ensure that child welfare staff have adoption-specific skills to move children toward permanency and to serve adoptive parents. For months, members of the Adoption Advisory Council helped shape the curriculum for Adoption Core Training. The 21-day course is now complete, and the training pilot started in March. By early summer, a full schedule of trainings will be in place for DCFS and private agency staff. Experienced adoptive

parents will serve as co-trainers and offer their perspective at points throughout the course.

### Welcome new members



*Kate Monte*

Kate Monte and her husband are currently licensed foster parents with Catholic Charities. She is also an adopted person. Her family recently completed adoptions of two children. Monte looks forward to giving input on how to make the adoption process more user-friendly to children and families and how to increase supports for adoptive families.

Eddie Baines raised her three youngest siblings, after her mother's death, along with her own five birth children. She and her husband James Baines have a total of 15 children (including five adoptions). Baines belongs to the CAPS Program and volunteers in the children's classroom at Gregory Academy.

The council is still seeking adoptive parents to represent Cook North and Cook Central. Contact the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422 for more information.

## Family Connections

DCFS, Adoptions Unlimited, and Lutheran Social Services of Illinois are working together on a project called Family Connections. The program is a federally-funded grant to encourage adoptions of older youth by supporting connections to their birth family.

Adoption of older youth can be complicated. Some youth say they don't want to be adopted or have loyalty issues with their birth family. Family Connections is developing a training course to help address those issues in a positive way so they don't become barriers. Family Connections will explore "openness" in adoption; in other words, ways to maintain important connections that the youth already has as he moves into a permanent placement.

The connections can be viewed as a continuum ranging from letters exchanged through the adoption agency, phone calls or visits, to the most open means of including birth family members as a part of the adoptive/permanent family. By integrating some appropriate degree of connectedness as a youth builds relationships with the new family, the potential for successful permanency increases.

The workgroup for the curriculum is meeting regularly and interviewing staff about attitudes related to openness in adoption. Adoptive families are also providing input from their experience and perspective. Families in Cook County and Peoria will also participate in a survey for the project.



## Midwest Adoption Center can help find information on a child's background or connect with birth family

DCFS recognizes the importance of information about a child and his or her birth family connections to families who choose to adopt. Midwest Adoption Center (MAC) is under contract to the Department to help prospective and post-adoptive parents and guardians obtain information from DCFS files or to connect with their child's birth relatives.

Knowing as much as possible about your child and his history may help you better understand him and his behavior. Perhaps he is asking more and more questions or your family counselor needs more information. Information about events in your child's life before he came to you, birth family history and more detailed health history may be found in Department files. At your request, MAC will attempt to locate all the files in the DCFS system that pertain to your child and prepare a written report.

This worked well for the Conrad family. Both of their adopted children were struggling and the family called on the Adoption/Guardianship Preservation program. The Conrads submitted a request to MAC for file information and later reported that the medical and background information they received had been extremely helpful. While they had been given some information at the time of placement, what MAC was able to find was much more detailed.

MAC provides another valuable service to adoptive parents considering making an outreach to a child's birth relative. For example, you may want to contact a sibling who was adopted by another family, a grandparent or birth mother or father. As your child's parent, you decide what kind of connection is best: exchanging specific information, continuing to exchange letters through MAC, or agreeing to release your name and address so that you can have direct contact. Your MAC caseworker will locate and contact the relative, then help facilitate whatever kind of connection is comfortable for both of you.

Sarah was a client who had three adopted children who are siblings. They had been asking more and more questions about things that happened before coming into her home – questions she really couldn't answer. She requested file information from MAC. After receiving the information and beginning to share it with the children, Sarah decided to ask MAC to locate a brother of her children. While the file indicated that he was living with a grandparent, the MAC caseworker finally located him living with the birth mother. Sarah and her MAC caseworker talked a lot about her feelings and concerns before she decided to exchange letters with the birth mother. Even though no names and addresses were shared, it still felt

like quite a risk. The MAC caseworker talked with both Sarah and the birth mother about what they might want to say in their letters and what the next steps could be. After exchanging one letter and pictures, Sarah and her children's birth mother decided that they wanted to communicate directly and asked MAC to release their names and addresses to each other. Not only has Sarah been able to get more birth family information for her children but also had an opportunity to build a relationship with their brother.

Young adoptees feel understood and supported when their parent is able to really "hear" their need to connect to a birth relative. Even if the outreach does not bring the hoped for connection, the bond between the child and his adoptive/guardianship parent will be strengthened through this combined effort. Knowing that his parent "gets it" can make a difference in the life of any child.

For more information about the DCFS Closed File Information and Search Service delivered by Midwest Adoption Center, call 847-298-9096. There is no fee for this service.



Gretchen  
Schulert

*Written by Gretchen Schulert. Schulert is co-director of the Midwest Adoption Center and a member of the IL Adoption Advisory Council.*

## Tell It Like It Is: readers respond

Families Now and Forever wants to hear the “real deal” on caring for children from those who know best. Here’s how readers responded to the question: **What is the most important thing you learned in foster care training and or what do you wish you had learned?**

I would say the most important thing I learned in foster care training was the need not to spank and why.

What I wish I would have learned is about Reactive Attachment Disorder and Attachment Disorders. The book I believe should be standard issue and required reading for all foster parents is “Building the Bonds of Attachment, Awakening Love in Deeply Troubled Children” by Daniel Hughes. I wish I would have known about Theraplay much earlier in my children’s placement.

*Okamura Family, Chicago*

The trainers that we had had a lot of personal experience as foster parents and adoptive families. Hearing how they felt was very, very helpful. I also appreciated learning the Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities. We also learned that no matter how nice the kids have it in the foster home they always want to go back to their parents.

I do wish we had been taught the reality of dealing with the agency. We were never told how truly hard it is to get services like medical and therapy. It took a lot of personal networking to find providers.

*Plofsky Family, Buffalo Grove*

The new question is...**What summer activity did you find most memorable or helpful with your children?**

You can contact me with your response by e-mail at [vjames@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:vjames@idcfs.state.il.us) or by phone at 312-814-6824. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Vanessa James  
Editor

## Correction

An article on the Education Training Vouchers in Volume 1 listed outdated guidelines. The new guidelines are: Eligible students may receive an award up to \$5,000 per student, **on an annual basis**, through age 22. Current and former youth in DCFS care who are age 16 up to and including age 22 are eligible. Those formerly in DCFS care who were adopted or placed in subsidized guardianship after age 16 are also eligible. Call the Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for details.



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**Purpose:** To help busy families more effectively parent children currently or formerly in DCFS care. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

**Address Changes:** Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change office addresses or request staff copies through the Editor.

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## A family for me

**Vicky [7019]** Vicky, 15, is an energetic young lady who likes to keep busy. Some of her favorite activities include playing tag, swimming, and shopping at the mall. In quieter moments, she enjoys taking long walks and going on scenic car rides.

Her worker said Vicky attaches well to others, and she appreciates kindness. She's glad to help out around the house. The forever family for Vicky would provide her with lots of love and patient supervision. You can make a long-term commitment to her care.

**Emmy [6341]** Emmy loves to draw. At 17, she is a talented artist who makes pictures of houses and gives them to friends as gifts. When she's not at the art table, Emmy likes to swim, bowl, or listen to music from the Backstreet Boys and Usher. While Emmy has some vision impairments, she is determined not to let this stop her from pursuing her interest in art.

Emmy's teachers said she is a loveable young lady who is eager to learn. She works well independently and in groups. Parents for Emmy would be loving and attentive. She wants to join a "nice" family that likes to go to church, the swimming pool, and the shopping mall. She would like to remain in contact with her brother and grandmother after she is adopted.

**Jessica [7537]** Jessica, 16, is a good-hearted young lady who works hard in school. When she's not focused on academics, Jessica likes to do arts and crafts projects, especially scrapbooks. She also enjoys shopping at the mall and playing softball with friends.

Her worker and teachers said Jessica is a very genuine person who likes to help others. She is able to make good decisions and has great potential as she matures. Jessica's forever family would be supportive and loving. She said her ideal family would have two parents and other children. Mom and Dad would be outgoing and open-minded, and they would have a good sense of humor. Jessica would like to maintain contact with her brother and sister after she is adopted.

**Marlene and Diamond [5940-41]** These talented youngsters could have a bright future in literature and the arts. Marlene, 13, has excellent reading and writing skills and has won awards for her creative stories. She has a lively personality and loves to talk with other people. In school, she typically receives As and Bs, and she has been on the cheerleading team.

Her brother, Diamond, 11, is a friendly young man whose passion is drawing. He loves to sketch with pencil and paper. When he's away

from the art table, Diamond likes to play basketball and compete at video games with friends. Marlene's foster parent and teacher said she is a smart young lady with great potential. Diamond's foster parent and teacher said he can be very pleasant and helpful. The family for Marlene and Diamond would provide them with lots of love and attention. Marlene said she'd like parents who enjoy conversation and good food. Diamond said he wants parents who are fun and playful.

**Quentin [4819]** Quentin, 12, is a likeable, affectionate young man who loves to spend time outside. His favorite activities include riding his bike and playing baseball and basketball. Indoors, Quentin enjoys racing matchbox cars and playing with Pokemon cards. He's also a bit of an artist and likes drawing and coloring pictures.

His foster parents said Quentin is "a great kid" who is kind and loving. His worker said Quentin is fun to do things with, and he lights up when he sees someone he likes. Parents for Quentin can be patient, loving, and affectionate. Quentin will benefit from having a predictable home life and a regular routine.

**If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI web site – [www.adoptinfo-il.org](http://www.adoptinfo-il.org).**



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# DO YOU KNOW A FAMILY FOR ME?

Call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois 800-572-2390.



## May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month

DCFS has planned many events for caregivers. Check the DCFS web site [www.state.il.us/dcfs](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs) for a schedule of upcoming events or contact your local field office.



Jessica [7537]

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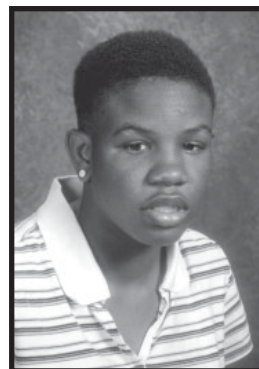
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Quentin [4819]



Marlene & Diamond  
[5940,5941]



Vicky [7019]



Emmy [6341]

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